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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

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Letter dated 3 April 1992 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to condemn the indiscriminate and deliberate shooting of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli military forces in the occupied Palestinian territory.

According to a report by Reuters on 1 April, the Israeli Border Police shot dead 4 Palestinian civilians and injured about 80 others while chasing a Palestinian car in the market of the Rafah refugee camp. At the time of the report, five of the wounded were in serious condition with gunshots to their heads and chests. A day later, on 2 April, Reuters reported that 21 other Palestinians were shot and wounded by the Israeli army in a clash with protesters in the Gaza Strip. The BBC reported that a woman had been killed when she was run over by an army jeep. It also reported that Palestinians had been fired upon indiscriminately and the free passage of ambulances carrying the wounded had been prevented.

According to the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (PHR), more than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since the beginning of the intifadah in December 1987.

The Centre reported on 26 March 1992 that since December 1991, 18 Palestinians had been killed by special Israeli undercover army units in what amounted to the "summary execution" of wanted youths. According to that report, the army had adopted a policy of seeking out activists, hunting them down and executing them.

Furthermore, the daily Ha'aretz reported on 17 March 1992 that a day earlier the Israeli Parliament had passed a law allowing Israeli settlers and soldiers to chase and shoot at Palestinians who threw stones at them, "even as

the stone-throwers run away". It was reported that the legislation was the newest in a series aimed at giving Israeli soldiers and settlers more latitude in "open-fire" policy regarding Palestinians. According to the new law, settlers who shoot and kill Palestinian stone-throwers would not "bear any criminal or negligent responsibility".

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People strongly condemns this increasing and ruthless recourse to military force in order to subdue an unarmed civilian population demonstrating for its inalienable national rights. These policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, are in violation not only of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, but also of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly; they are also extremely harmful to efforts to promote a just peace in the region.

The Committee requests that Israel cease immediately the killing and injuring of Palestinian civilians and accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and that it abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Convention, the Covenant and the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Committee appeals urgently to you and to all concerned, in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, to take all necessary measures to ensure these objectives.

I would like to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 33, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSÉ
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People